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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN; NORTH KOREA

AFGHANISTAN

1. "What should NATO do in Afghanistan?"
The leading Globe and Mail opined (8/18): "What's to be done when your raison d'tre has disappeared? That has been the question faced by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization since the end of the Cold War. Who is NATO's enemy now that the Soviet empire is gone - indeed, now that Russia is an associate member of the Western military alliance and nations that once were part of the Communist Warsaw Pact are full NATO members? NATO's military action in Kosovo in 1999, which included Canadian participation, was one answer. Work jointly to end bloodshed in your own backyard. But to the United States (and this was during the Clinton administration), the operation in Kosovo was a kind of war-by-bureaucracy. Other NATO members played a larger strategic role than their firepower warranted.... Now, however, NATO has gone to Afghanistan. Twenty-one months after U.S. forces drove the Taliban from power, the 19-member NATO alliance has taken on responsibility for keeping the peace in Kabul.... [I]t is less clear to what degree NATO is to become a force for pro-viding nation-building as well as security. One goes hand in hand with the other in a place such as Afghanistan, where the Taliban left behind an institutional vacuum. NATO, though, has little experience in matters such as the training of police and judges.... The Bush administration welcomes NATO's new responsibilities, and for good reason. The U.S. military's hands are full, largely in Iraq. The White House may have sidelined NATO after Sept. 11, but now it needs the help. Washington has also noticed with some satisfaction that nations which opposed the invasion of Iraq - Canada, for one, but also the dastardly duo (in Republicans' eyes, anyway) of Germany and France - are contributing troops to ISAF, or did so in the past 18 months. There is evidence that the transatlantic rift earlier this year may quietly be healing, aided by the fact that ISAF's mandate is authorized by the UN. Indeed, some in Washington suggest NATO could be the perfect organization to take over the military occupation of Iraq. This, for now anyway, represents a reach. NATO must act successfully in Kabul before it should consider further deployments.... Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's President, has urged NATO to consider an expanded deployment, as has Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN's special representative to Afghanistan. This would require, by most estimates, at least another 10,000 troops - a contribution NATO is not yet willing to make. Canada's military, for one, is already stretched to the limit. Other NATO countries, though, are capable of providing additional soldiers. A NATO force that would patrol all of Afghanistan is worth serious consideration. Start with Kabul, certainly, but if that deployment is successful, NATO should be prepared to take the next step."

2. "What a mess we're in"
Contributing foreign editor Eric Margolis observed in the conservative tabloid Ottawa Sun (8/17): "...NATO troops are in Kabul not because the alliance wanted to get involved in Afghanistan's 24-year-old conflict, but because Washington browbeat Canada and its European allies into helping share the burden of garrisoning a conquered nation. Better, figured NATO governments, to placate Washington by sending troops to lower threat Afghanistan than to dangerous Iraq.... Not only are the U.S. and its allies mired in an intensifying guerrilla war in a chaotic nation, they now find themselves in league with world-class drug dealers. Afghanistan was the world's leading grower and exporter of opium, the base for morphine and heroin. When the Taliban regime drove the Afghan Communists from power in 1996, they vowed to eradicate opium, though it was the dirt-poor nation's only cash crop. By 2001, according to UN drug agencies, the Taliban had totally eradicated opium production in areas it controlled. The only production of opium during the Taliban era was done by its bitter foe, the Northern Alliance. The Bush administration was giving millions in anti-drug aid to the Taliban until four months before the 9/11 attacks. After 9/11, the Taliban

was demonized by the Bush administration and U.S. media for refusing to hand over Osama bin Laden without first seeing evidence of his guilt. The U.S. invasion followed, the Taliban was overthrown and retreated into the mountains. When the Northern Alliance seized power in Kabul with help from Russia and the U.S., it revived opium growing and soon began producing morphine and refined heroin, processes formerly performed in Pakistan. Today, Afghanistan, a U.S. protectorate, is again the leading producer of heroin, accounting for 4,000 tons annually, 75% of total world production.... By helping protect Karzai and the Northern Alliance, Canada, like the U.S., has become an unwitting, but very real, accessory to the international heroin trade, and the partner of a criminal regime."

NORTH KOREA

13. "Negotiation still best way to de-fang North Korea"

Under the sub-heading, "Rogue nation is the greatest source of instability in the region," the left-of-center Vancouver Sun commented (8/18): "Six-way talks aimed at defusing a standoff between the United States and North Korea over the latter's claims it is developing nuclear weapons could begin as soon as Aug.

126. Originally, North Korea insisted on bilateral meetings with the U.S., but last week it agreed to talks that would also include South Korea, Russia, China and Japan. Behind-the-scenes diplomacy from China apparently brokered the change in position.... The participation of the other great regional powers in helping to move this delicate negotiation forward is good news both for the U.S. and for the concept of multilateralism.... [B]ut the rhetoric between North Korea and the U.S. reached a new level of rancour when John Bolton, the seasoned American diplomat who is undersecretary of state for arms control, made a recent speech that personally attacked Mr. Kim for turning his country into a 'hellish nightmare.' North Korea responded by referring to Mr. Bolton as a 'bloodsucker' and 'human scum.' All this might easily be dismissed as the over-inflated rhetoric that sometimes characterizes political negotiations. Some suggest it is part of a two-track American strategy for weakening the North Korean dictator's position by drawing a distinction between him and his unfortunate subjects. Nevertheless, the escalating insults do take place against a background of rising tension. While it makes sense to prepare for the worst in dealing with a rogue state, the best hope for resolving the impasse and persuading the North Koreans to forgo nuclear weapons still looks like a multilateral forum in which the regional stakeholders most at risk can also have a say. And, as frustrating as the search for a solution might seem, the present White House would do well to hearken to the tested policies of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. They argued persuasively that the best way to improve odious regimes like the then-apartheid government of South Africa was not by isolating them, but by patiently drawing them into engagement with western-style capitalism and its benefits."

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